DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 219 319 SO 014 178

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TITLE A.A.G. Annual Conference Participation: The Spatial Dimension.
PUB DATE Apr 82
NOTE 18p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association of American Geographers (San Antonio, TX, April 25-28, 1982). Maps may not reproduce clearly in microfiche or paper copy.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Conferences; *Geographic Location; Geography; Migration Patterns; *Participation; *Professional Associations; Site Analysis
IDENTIFIERS *Association of American Geographers

ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes the spatial patterning of participants attending four annual conferences of the Association of American Geographers (AAG). The four most recent conventions were selected for the study: Los Angeles in 1981, Louisville in 1980, Philadelphia in 1979, and New Orleans in 1980. A conference participant is defined as a person whose name appeared on the conference program as presenting a paper, chairing a session, operating a workshop, or the like. Two of the most common variables in migration studies were utilized: the size of the population at the point of origin and the distance to the destination. For each of the years under review the "Directory of College Geography of the United States" was utilized to determine the number of full time geography faculty in each state. This variable represented the population mass of each state or origin area. Desire line measures were used to ascertain distance factors and were calculated from the geographical center of each state to each conference city. Results show that the number of conference participants did not vary dramatically from year to year, in spite of the fact that some of the conference locations were over 3000 miles apart. This phenomena can be accounted for by the fact that those states with the largest numbers of full time geographers tend to send the largest contingents of participants to the annual meetings. Although the location of the conference did increase participation numbers from nearby states, this factor did not significantly influence the overall spatial patterns of participants. (RM)

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A.A.G. Annual Conference Participation: The Spatial Dimension

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SP014178

Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association of American Geographers (San Antonio, TX, April 25-28, 1982).

A.A.G. Annual Conference Participation: The Spatial Dimension

ABSTRACT: Attendance at AAG Annual Conferences has come under much discussion recently. This paper analyses the spatial patterning of conference participants at the Los Angeles, Louisville, Philadelphia and New Orleans meetings.

The 1981 meeting of the Association of American Geographers in Los Angeles assembled a record crowd of geographers for a west coast location, up some 650 persons from the 1350 that attended the Seattle convention in 1974 (1). Along with this increase in the number of registrants has been the increase in the number of conference participants. While some criticize the open type of convention it must be admitted that it has enabled geographers to freely present ideas and permitted many to extricate funds for travel by having their names placed on the conference program. While it is not the intention of this paper to debate the pro's and con's of the open type convention, this debate did raise interesting questions as to the national distributional patterns formed by conference participants and whether the spatial patterns change with the location of each annual meeting.

In order to assess the spatial patterning of conference participants attending AAG annual meetings, the four most recent conventions were selected (Los Angeles in 1981, Louisville in 1980, Philadelphia in 1979 and New Orleans in 1978). These sites represented a range of locations, both north and south, as well as east and west, upon which to base the study. The use of the

term "conference participant" requires some clarification and used here it was defined as a person whose name appeared on the conference program as presenting a paper, chairing a session, operating a workshop or the like (2). Care was taken to make only one notation for those persons whose name appeared in the program more than once.

In this preliminary analysis two of the most common variables in migration studies were utilized: (i) the size of the population at the point of origin; and (ii) the distance to the destination. For each of the years under review the Directory of College Geography of the United States (3, 4) was utilized to determine the number of full time geography faculty in each state; this variable represented the population mass of each state or origin area. Desire line measures were used to ascertain distance factors and were calculated from the geographical center of each state to each conference city. The study was restricted to the coterminous USA.

As may be seen from the maps the spatial patterning of the number of conference participants did not vary dramatically from year to year, inspite of the fact that some of the conference locations were over 3,000 miles apart. This phenomenon can be accounted for by the fact that those states with the largest numbers of full time geographers tend to send the largest contingents of participants to the annual meetings. This factor

is further supported by the high correlation coefficients representing the relationship between the numbers of conference participants and the number of full time geographers in each state (see Table I). It was noted, therefore, that states in the Midwest through to New York were consistently ranked high in their levels of conference participants, as were California and Texas. Although the location of the conference did increase participation numbers from nearby states this factor did not significantly influence the overall spatial patterns, of participants. This phenomenon was born out by the fact that the relationship between increasing distance from the conference site and the number of conference participants, although negative and signifying distance decay, was not significant at the 0.05 confidence level. Thus the function of distance from the conference site was not a variable to be considered as important in this spatial patterning.

A visual comparison of the maps indicated that there was some degree similarity between the spatial patterning of the numbers of conference participants at each of annual meetings of the AAG under review and to test this hypothesis, Table II was calculated. The Coefficient of Geographical Association (sometimes called the Coefficient of Linkage or the Index of dissimilarity, depending upon the precise nature of the formula utilized) was used in the following form: (5)

$$C_g = 1/2 \sum_{i=1}^{n} \left| \frac{100X_i}{X_t} - \frac{100Y_i}{Y_t} \right|$$

where: X_i and Y_i are the areal occurrences being investigated X_t and Y_t are the total occurrences in all areas. Since a low reading on the scale 0-100 indicates a high level of association between any two patterns being investigated, it may be stated that there is a measureable degree of spatial correspondence between the patterns of participants at the four conferences.

It would seem from the foregoing that the location of the AAG annual meeting does little to change the distributional pattern of conference participants. Furthermore, it would seem that those states which house the greatest numbers of full time geographers are the ones that send the greatest number of participants to the annual meetings and that the influence of distance in this spatial patterning is of only limited significance.

Literature Cited

1 Association of American Geographers, Newsletter, Washington, D.C.: Volume 16, Number 6 (June 1981), 1.

2 Association of American Geographers, Annual Meeting Program, 1978, 1979, 1980 and 1981.

3 Monsebroten, Dale R. (ed.) Schwendeman's Directory of College Geography of the United States: Richmond, Kentucky: The Geographical Studies Research Center, Eastern Kentucky University, Vol. XX, 1979; Vol. XXXI, 1980; and Vol. XXXII, 1981.

4 Schwendeman, J.R., Sr. and Schwendeman, J.R., Jr. (eds.) Directory of College Geography of the United States: Richmond, Kentucky: The Geographical Studies and Research Center, Eastern Kentucky University, Vol. XXIX, 1978.

5 Smith, David M., Patterns in Human Geography, New York: Crane Russak and Company, Inc., 1975, 200-1 and 236-238.

TABLE I

Correlation Analysis

Conference Location	Conference Participants and the Number of Full Time Geographers	Conference Participants and Distance from the Conference Location
New Orleans	+0.9132*	-0.0260
Philadelphia	+0.8862*	-0.1798
Louisville	+0.8800*	-0.0336
Los Angeles	+0.9059*	-0.2269

(*significant at 0.05 level)

TABLE II

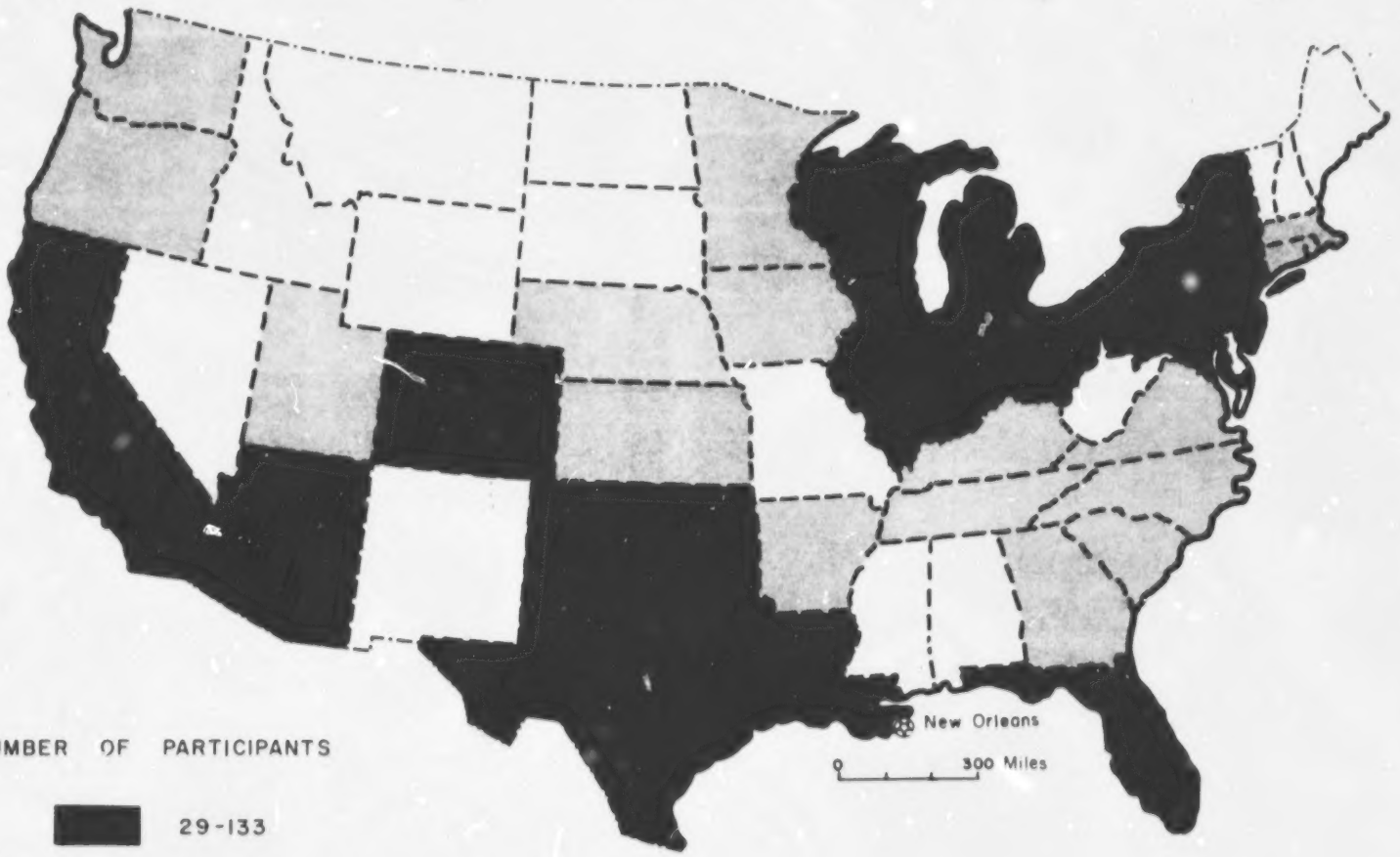
Coefficients of Geographical Association
Between the Four Conference Distributions

	New Orleans	Philadelphia	Louisville
New Orleans	---	---	---
Philadelphia	13.22	---	---
Louisville	14.10	12.23	---
Los Angeles	17.31	18.60	18.66

List of Maps

MAP I	A.A.G. Conference Participants:	New Orleans 1978
MAP II	A.A.G. Conference Participants:	Philadelphia: 1979
MAP III	A.A.G. Conference Participants:	Louisville 1980
MAP IV	A.A.G. Conference Participants:	Los Angeles 1981

A. A. G. ANNUAL CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS: NEW ORLEANS 1978



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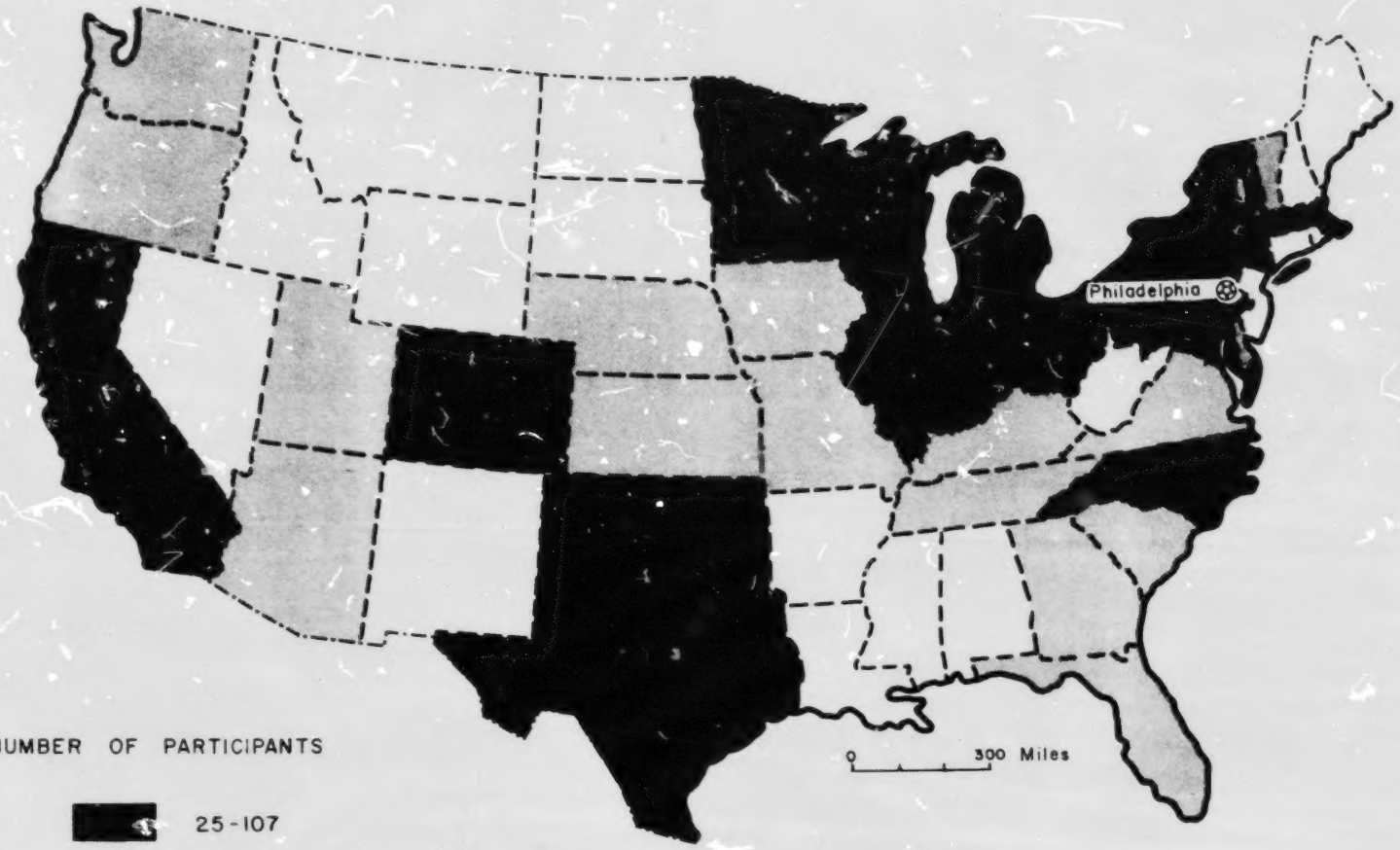
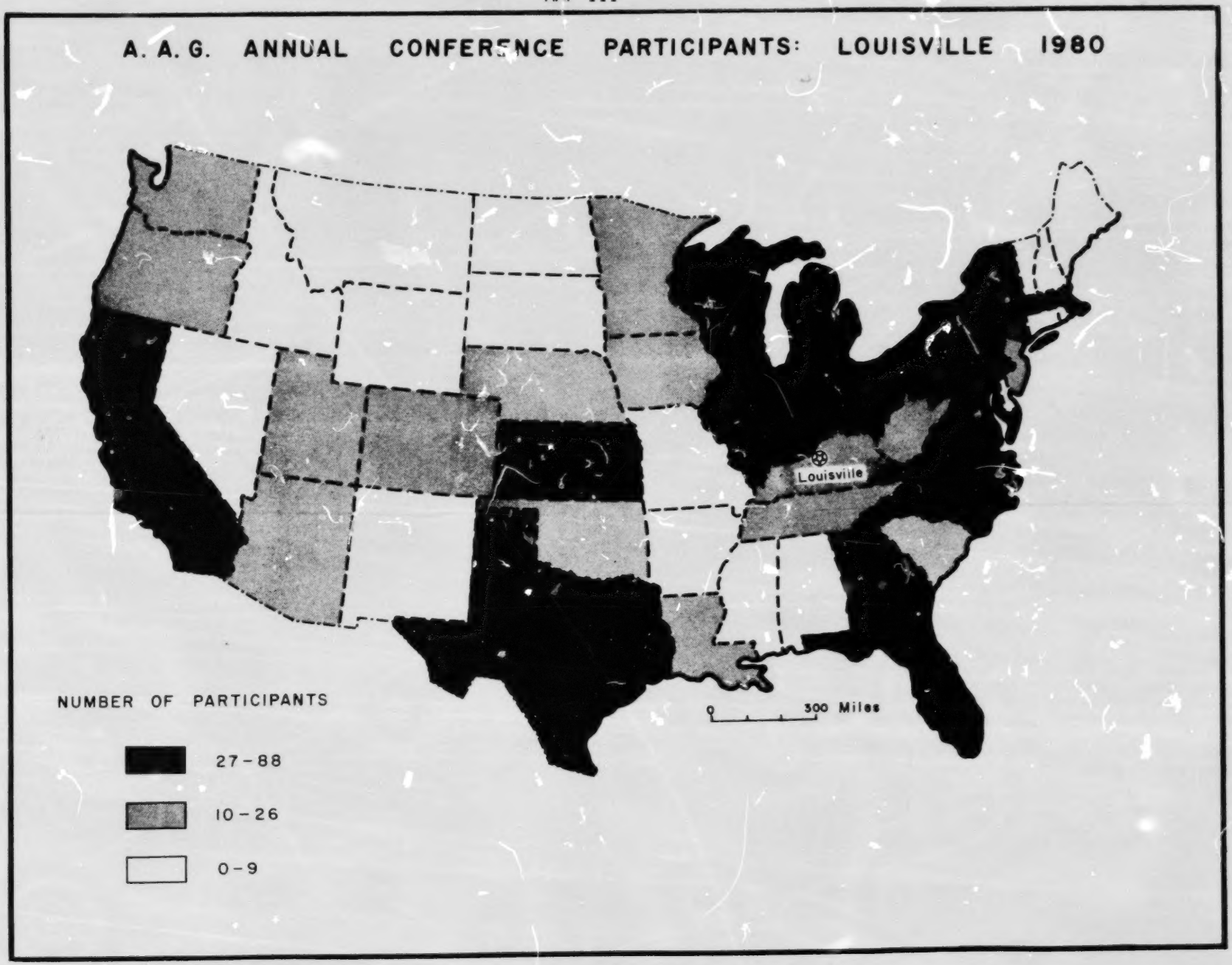
MAP II

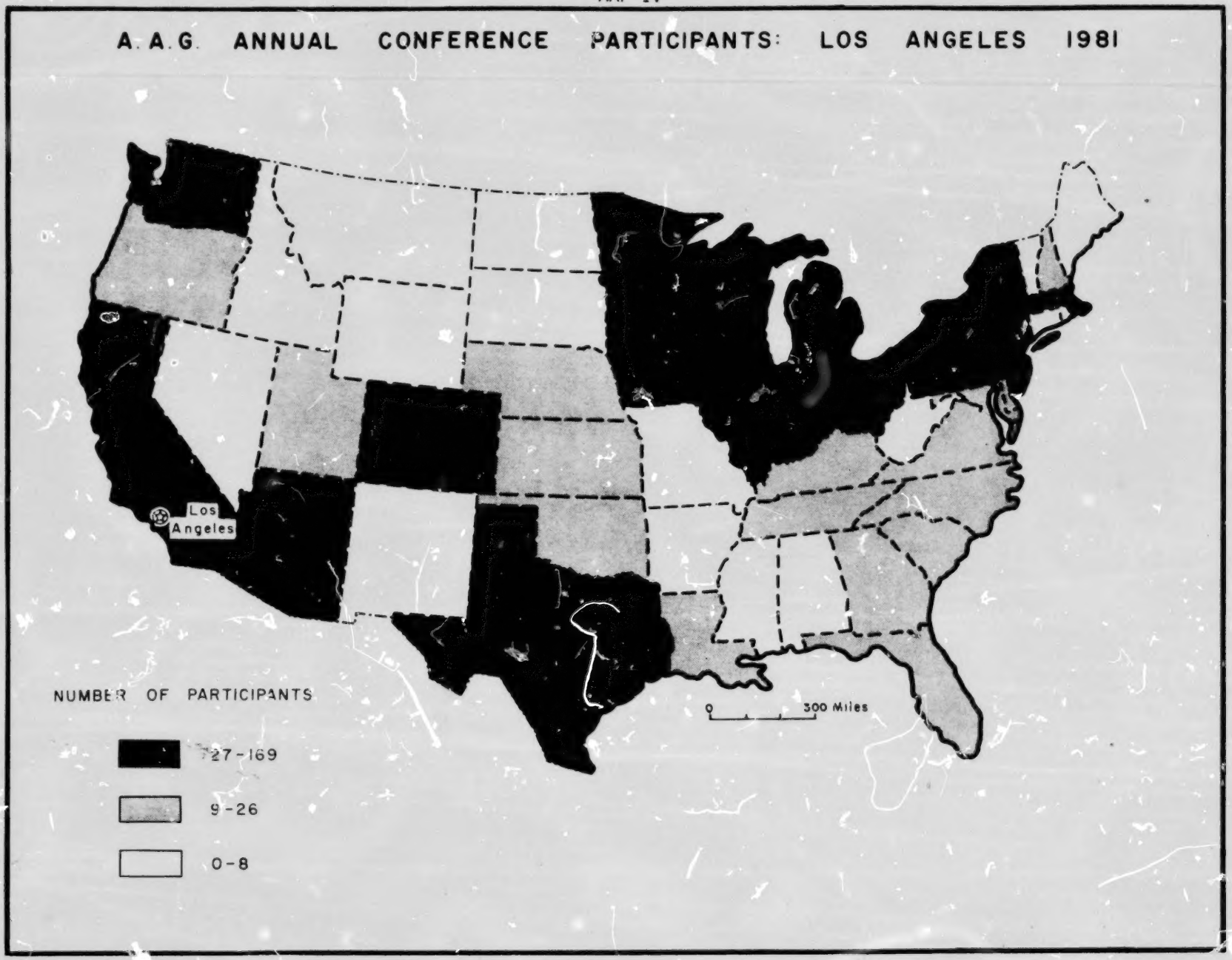
A. A. G. ANNUAL CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS: PHILADELPHIA 1979



MAP III


A. A. G. ANNUAL CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS: LOUISVILLE 1980
Louisville
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS
27-88
10-26
0-9
0
300 Miles

MAP IV


A. A. G. ANNUAL CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS: LOS ANGELES 1981
Los Angeles
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS
27-169
9-26
0-8
0
300 Miles